

September 6, 2017

RE: Support for House Bills 4781, 4782, and 4783

Honorable Chairwoman Hughes and Members of the House Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee:

My name Michael Reuter, and I am the owner and CEO of American Cycle & Fitness. We are the largest independently owned bicycle retailer with 6 locations in Michigan. Additionally, I sit on the board of the League of Michigan Bicyclists, am an avid cyclist, and a passionate eBike user. I am testifying in support of House Bills 4781, 4782, and 4783.

In 2017, our sales of eBikes have quadrupled over 2016 and are projected to follow a similar trend in 2018. These are real numbers that represent a significant economic opportunity, not only for my business as a retailer, but also for the entire state as more people use eBikes for transportation and recreation. Michigan currently leads the nation with over 2,400 miles of rail-trails and many more of paved recreational trails, which draw tourists from all over the country who seek to experience our State's scenery by bike. By defining eBikes like traditional bicycles, HB 4781 will allow residents and tourists to experience these trails via eBike. Furthermore, by exempting eBikes from no-fault insurance requirements, HB 4783 will remove an additional barrier that inhibits consumers from embracing eBikes as a viable form of transportation and recreation. There are a huge percentage of our consumers that would never get on a bicycle because they feel they are physically unable. An electric-assist bicycle takes that barrier away and allows for most everyone to ride, get physically active, and experience again the joy of riding a bicycle.

According to the most recent National Household Transportation Survey, 50% of all trips are 4 miles or less. For those that have experienced an eBike, it becomes apparent that so many more of these short trips can be completed by an eBike. Imagine how livable our communities would become if we were able to shift just a small portion of those trips to bicycles. We would have less congestion, a healthier environment, healthier citizens, and reduced transportation costs. All of these factors will continue to make our state more welcoming to tourists and new residents alike.

Recently a good customer of ours drove up from Toledo to purchase an eBike and this is what he had to say:

It worked incredibly well for me. Since I have a disability which prevents me from walking, the e-bike has given me a new lease on life. I rode 25 miles in the Irish Hills last night with the Adrian MLB group. I am so excited about this helpful technology. I will be coming to get one for my wife soon. She loved it. The Michigan Shores ride was very challenging at points, especially several plus 12 degree grade multi-humper hills near Elsworth. If not for the e-bike, I would still be up there in a ditch somewhere.

I do think it should be allowed on all bike trails as I ride my Metro trails in Toledo to great aplomb. This technology has got me back in the game. A year ago, I never thought I would ride again. Now, a 60 miler is well within my wheelhouse. Matt Lark

Misconceptions and confusion about eBikes contribute to many of the barriers that prevent people from accepting them like traditional bicycles. Our experience has been that a customer's perception and understanding of eBikes changes drastically once they have tried one for themselves and realize how similar they are to conventional bicycles. They are comprised of many of the same components, and the experience is remarkably like riding a standard bicycle except that the assist motor makes the hills flatter and the miles shorter. Contrary to the beliefs of many, they are not mopeds or motorcycles. To ride one puts an immediate smile on most everyone's face, and even the most outspoken critics become converts. I believe eBikes already have, and will continue to, change people's lives. I know they have changed mine.

